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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [TU](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#)  
SUBJECT: TURKISH MEDIA REACTION  
THURSDAY, MAY 21, 2009

IN TODAY'S PAPERS

Continued Coverage of Ankara Court Decision that President Gul Should Stand Trial for 1990s 'Missing Trillions' Case  
Media outlets continue commenting on the ruling of Ankara's Sincan heavy penal court that President Abdullah Gul should stand trial for fraud over the "trillions" which went missing from the Welfare Party (RP) funds in the 1990s. In a joint press conference with visiting Slovenian President Danilo Turk yesterday, Gul said that fraud charges were ten years old and stem from allegations from when he was the deputy chairman of the RP. Gul noted that at that time, the RP had ten deputy chairs, and that he personally had nothing to do with the spending of party funds. Gul noted that in the past the charges against him were taken up by the court. "At that time, the court rejected the trial because it became clear that I had no responsibility over the missing party funds," he said. Gul said he was "not afraid to stand trial," adding he was only concerned that the post of the presidency could be "harmful." Prime Minister Erdogan said courts sometimes make "political" decisions, adding that according to the constitution, the president could only be tried for "treason."

Mainstream Vatan says the Sincan judge's labeling of Gul as a "suspect" was not been good, adding the ruling has infringed on the spirit of the constitution.

Editorial Commentary on Court Case against the President

Mumtazer Turkone wrote in Islamist oriented Zaman: "The court decision against President Gul is a violation of existing laws regarding the president's immunity. The judge of this decision is blindly ignoring the Constitution as he apparently takes some benefit for his personal career out of this controversy."

Papers: Erdogan, Gul to Exchange Posts in 2014  
Media outlets report Prime Minister Erdogan sparked a heated controversy by saying he was planning to quit politics in 2015, when his duties as party chairman are due to end after three terms in accordance with the AKP regulations. Papers speculate Erdogan plans to take the presidential post in 2014. Leftist-nationalist

Cumhuriyet claims Erdogan is planning to become president when President Gul's term in office ends in 2014. Even if the president serves five years and leaves in 2012, Erdogan will still become president, and Abdullah Gul will take over the chairmanship of the AKP, according to Cumhuriyet.

**Turkish Intelligence Chief's Term to be Extended**  
Mainstreams Hurriyet and Sabah report the ruling AKP government will extend the office term of Emre Taner, the undersecretary of Turkey's national intelligence agency (MIT) for six months as long as the National Security Council (MGK) agrees to it. Leftist Taraf says Taner has established a "critical dialogue" with the Kurdish regional leader Massoud Barzani, and will work for six more months to seek a settlement to Turkey's Kurdish question. Another reason Taner's tenure was extended was that the MIT U/S supports the 'Ergenekon' investigation, according to Taraf.

**Oskanyan: There Will be No Progress if Turkey Continues to Raise the Karabakh Precondition**

Papers report former Armenian foreign minister Vardan Oskanyan told Turkish journalists in Yerevan that the Turkey-Armenia relationship could be "moved forward" if the "Nagorno-Karabakh question is taken out of the equation." On PM Erdogan's recent remarks that Turkey could send back some 40,000 Armenians working illegally in Turkey, Oskanyan said it was an "unfortunate statement." "I was hopeful that a policy change could come until Erdogan raised the Karabakh issue. If Turkey normalizes its ties with Armenia, the solution of the Karabakh question will be much easier," said Oskanyan.

**Iraq Asks Turkey for More Water from The Tigris and Euphrates**

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**Rivers**

Liberal Radikal says Iraq is facing a significant drought this summer if Turkey continues to retain waters from the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The paper says Iraq is pressing Turkey for more water. Iraqi specialists have repeatedly asked Ankara to let the Euphrates to flow at 700 cubic meters a second instead of the current 230 cubic meters per second. The situation is not yet that serious on the Tigris River, but Iraq is concerned that Turkey's Ilisu dam, when finished, will have a capacity of over 10 billion cubic meters. Aoun Thiab Abdullah, director of the National Center for Water Resources, said at a recent seminar in Baghdad, "If the water level in the Euphrates continues to decrease, we will not be able to irrigate crops in July, which will be a disaster." Iraqis complain that Turkey failed to meet the promises to double the quota of water for Iraq, which was made by President Gul during a visit to Baghdad in March, according to Radikal.

**President Rajapaksa Phones Gul on His Victory against Tamil Tigers**  
Mainstreams Hurriyet and Sabah report Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa phoned President Abdullah Gul to give details about the Sri Lankan government's victory against the insurgent terrorist group the Tamil Tigers. Gul reportedly "welcomed" the developments, adding that Turkey was ready to provide humanitarian support if necessary. Hurriyet says Rajapaksa asked Gul for help in blocking the activities of the Tamils against Sri Lanka on international platforms, since Turkey is a member of the UN Security Council.

**Editorial Commentary on Sri Lanka/Tamil and the PKK**

Ertugrul Ozkok wrote in mainstream Hurriyet: "Can we possibly take the Sri Lankan experience regarding the Tamils as a model against PKK? With this method, Turkey can only finish off the PKK and still the Kurdish problem remains. For us, the method should be winning the hearts and minds and work through democratization in order to reach a settlement."

Oktay Eksi wrote in mainstream Hurriyet: "Ending a dispute with bloody methods cannot be something to be envious about. This is not a healthy way and as far as the Sri Lanka example is concerned, it remains to be seen whether such a bloody end to the war will really put the Tamil question to an end."

**Turkish Command in Larissa Stirs Up Controversy in Athens**  
Media report that the Greek media and political opposition are astir

over a NATO decision made in early May in Brussels in which the NATO command on the Greek island of Larissa will be rotated between Turkey and Greece. Mainstream Aksam reports, "The winds of peace are blowing in the Aegean," as, "NATO decided to rotate command in Larissa between Turkey and Greece," but, "Athens is enraged by the decision because there has not been a Turkish commander on Greek soil since 1821," and "the Greek media and opposition are protesting." Mainstream Hurriyet calls the reaction in Athens "a brouhaha over the NATO base." Liberal Radikal reports, "The NATO decision has created reactions in Athens." Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak headlines, "The Turkish Command Shock."

A 4X4 Decision from Obama (Yeni Safak)

Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reports, "Americans, who love big cars, were given a shock yesterday from Obama" as "He announced a new plan to limit gas mileage standards to 7 liters per 100 kilometers." The paper calls the move "another blow to GM." Islamist-oriented Zaman headlines, "Americans Are Shrinking Their Cars." Mainstream Sabah reports, "Americans will use smaller cars," as "The Obama administration is seeking ways to reduce carbon emissions in American vehicles."

U.S. To Try Guantanamo Suspect in New York

CNN Turk reports, "An official announcement indicates that the man suspected of masterminding the 1998 attack against the U.S. embassy in Tanzania will be tried in a New York federal court."

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Editorial Commentary on NBC/Zardari Interview

Tamer Korkmaz wrote in Islamist oriented Yeni Safak: "The recent developments regarding the Bush administration's dirty works strike a strong shock wave to the face of pro-Americans in the Turkish media. What Seymour Hersh said, even though he backpedalled by saying he was misquoted, is not something we can simply ignore. Especially anyone who remembers Washington's pressure upon the Pakistani government at that time to announce that Al Qaeda carried out the Bhutto assassination. Not to even mention that Al Qaeda itself did not claim any responsibility. Similarly, Zardari claims that Osama Bin Laden was released by the U.S. after Pakistani authorities captured him three months after the 9/11 attack. Yet again our pro-American embedded media will not even bother to deal with any of this and they will simply call all of it as 'a conspiracy' or 'insane.'"

TV News (CNN Turk)

Domestic

- Israeli drones will be delivered to Turkey in August.
- A parliamentary commission approved a draft bill for the establishment of a "security undersecretariat."
- Former cabinet minister Adnan Ekmen said the PKK was not responsible for the killing of 11 villagers in an attack in Guclukonak in the province of Sirnak 13 years ago.
- Police officer Oral Emre Atar has been sentenced to 25 months in prison for killing a young car driver who did not stop at a checkpoint. The father of the victim denounced the "symbolic" penalty, saying he would appeal the verdict at the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).
- Finance Minister Mehmet Simsek said a "big budget deficit" was expected this year, and added that Turkey needed radical measures.

World

- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says his country was ready to open peace talks with Syria without preconditions.
- French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner says the Mediterranean Union project has been deadlocked as a result of tensions between

Israel and Palestine.

- British member of the European Parliament, Robert Kilroy Silk, has filed a parliamentary motion which gives the false impression that female genital mutilation was common practice in Turkey.

- The 28th annual Turkish Day Parade will take place in New York on May 23.

JEFFREY